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SBA Assistance Keeps Family-owned Business “Running Like a Deere”

FAIRMONT - Little did Dallas Boyers realize when he opened a feed and farm supply store in the Marion county area in 1952 that it would evolve into one of the largest John Deere dealerships in West Virginia whose products can be found all over the world.

Middletown Tractor Sales is now operated by Dallas' son and grandson, Jim and Adam Boyers, who make an excellent father and son team of small business owners. What Jim has taken and grown from his father Dallas, Adam has taken and grown to greater heights.

Dallas started the business in Mannington and sold farm equipment in addition to farm supplies and feed. In 1954 the business sold its first John Deere tractor and the rest, as the saying goes, is history. In 1971 the business expanded into a larger facility and was run by Dallas and his oldest son, Gary. Jim came into the business in 1978 and started managing the Fairmont branch in 1983. Throughout its long history the business has always been very “family” oriented. Elaine, Dallas' wife, helped in the accounts receivable and clerical areas for almost fifty years. Jim's wife Betty does the accounts payable, while Zach Marsh, Jim's son-in-law, helps with special project needs. Even Jim's daughter Adrienne, a teacher, has helped in the busy season.

Jim and Adam were recently recognized by the U.S. Small Business Administration as West Virginia's Entrepreneurial Success and Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2004 at their annual Small Business Week awards ceremony. The awards are part of the annual recognition SBA bestows upon small business owners and champions.

“I was really surprised when I was named SBA's Young Entrepreneur,” said Adam. “I'm not one that looks for awards and recognition, but it's nice when it comes your way. It was a very proud moment in my life.”

Entrepreneurship seems to be bred into the Boyers. Both Jim and Adam attended college with other careers in mind. Jim graduated from West Virginia University's School of Pharmacy and became dissatisfied with being a full-time pharmacist.

“I really wasn't able to fully apply what I'd learned in college and felt I should get back in the family business,” said Jim. “I'd grown up sweeping floors and waiting on customers for dad and worked at the store all through high school. I just felt more satisfied working for myself, although I still continue to work as a part-time pharmacist.”

Jim also co-owns Fairmont Specialty Services, Ravenswood Specialty Services, and Specialty Warehousing as well as being partners with Adam in Boyers' Enterprises, a commercial real estate firm. In addition, Jim is very proud to be a director on a local bank board, First Exchange Bank, as well as an owner and operator of Paradise Valley Farm with his wife Betty.

Adam entered college with thoughts of a medical career. “I actually started out wanting to be a doctor, but switched career choices after my freshman year,” said Adam. “I was doing alright, but like in dad's case, it just

didn't feel right." Adam decided to pursue business instead and graduated from WVU with a degree in business and finance. His business acumen has been instrumental in enhancing the growth of Middletown Tractor every year since he came on board.

Although blessed with a successful business, the Boyers' have utilized the services of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center and the SBA to strengthen and develop the company even further.

Middletown Tractor Sales received business counseling, attended SBDC-hosted workshops and seminars, and utilized the Small Business Work Force Program to provide training to employees. Adam has even taught a few youth entrepreneurship workshops for the Fairmont Regional SBDC.

The company also received assistance from SBA's procurement counseling services, which helped expand the business into government contracting.

"The procurement assistance we received from SBA was excellent and enabled us to better understand what government contracting is all about," said Adam. "As a result of that assistance, our products can be found anywhere the Department of Defense is located in the world."

Jim keeps an article clipped from a local newspaper about a West Virginian in South Korea who walked by a John Deere tractor with the Middletown Tractor Sales sticker on it. "You never know where you'll see our tractors," stated Jim.

Equipment from Middletown Tractor Sales can be seen just about every time a person drives down the interstate. They have contracts to supply mowers and tractors to the West Virginia Department of Highways and State Parks.

"Being a small business owner isn't a piece of cake," Adam is quick to point out. "It's a lot of hard work and extremely long hours," he adds. "Being the grandson of the founder and son of the owner doesn't make it a cake walk, but I haven't regretted it yet."

"I've learned a lot from my father by just observing the way he works with customers and respects people in general," said Adam. "He demonstrates an excellent work ethic and truly leads by example. I'm confident from what I've learned from him over the years, I'll be more than ready to take over the reins of the business when it comes time for him to retire."

Adam is preparing to move the business to the fourth generation of Boyers by bringing his infant son, Blake, into the office. Looks like John Deere's slogan "Nothing Runs Like a Deere" can be passed along to the Boyers family.

For additional information about the programs and services offered by the SBA and their resource partners, contact the West Virginia District Office at 1-800-767-8052 ext. 8 or by email at wvinfo@sba.gov, or visit our web site at www.sba.gov/wv.

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